

WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COUNTIES

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State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development

Unemployment Unchanged in Metro Area in December Seasonal Increases Influence Rural Counties

The **December** unemployment rate in the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan area was unchanged from November. Seasonally adjusted, the unemployment rate remained at 4.8 percent in December, just one-tenth of a percentage point higher than the state rate of 4.7 percent, also unchanged from November. Two other metropolitan areas in Wisconsin reported unchanged unemployment rates while three reported lower rates from November. Four of the eleven metro areas in the state, Janesville-Beloit, Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine, reported unemployment rates higher than the Eau Claire area.

The current rate, however, is much higher than one year ago. Last December the seasonally adjusted rate in the metro area was 3.5 percent and there were roughly 1,000 fewer unemployed residents. The number of unemployed in December did decline ever so slightly from November but remains over 4,000.

Unemployment was higher in every month in 2001 than in 2000 and the months of 2000 were higher than in 1999 when several months set record lows. The average unemployment rate for 2001 was 4.4 percent, higher than the 3.8 percent rate of 2000 and the 3.0 percent unemployment rate in 1999. The average unemployment rate in the Eau Claire-Chippewa metro area is the highest since 1994 when it was 7.8 percent.

In the nine-county region of West Central Wisconsin the unadjusted unemployment rate in December of 4.7 percent was slightly higher than the metro unadjusted rate of 4.6 percent. Both were higher than the state unadjusted rate of 4.2 percent and lower than the national rate of 5.4 percent.

One quick glance at the graph and it becomes apparent that unemployment rates in December are lower than earlier this year. The normal trend in unemployment is to hit a low in October, then begin an upward climb toward a high in February or March. This means that the area will see higher unemployment rates as we get closer to spring.

The annual average unemployment rate for West Cen-

tral Wisconsin in 2001 was 4.7 percent after peaking at 6.6 percent in February and setting a low of 3.2 percent in September. This is the highest annual rate for the region since 1994 when it was 5.1 percent. Even though the rate is lower in 2001, there were actually more unemployed than in 1994. In 1994, 10,660 out of a labor force of 208,400 were unemployed; in 2001, 10,850 were unemployed in a labor force of 233,200. The larger labor force in 2001 is the result of more residents with jobs, which contributes a smaller percentage of residents without jobs.

The number of unemployed in December in West Central Wisconsin was 1,300 more than in November and 3,000 more than one year earlier. The county with the largest increase in the number of unemployed, excluding the metro area, was Barron County. There, the number of unemployed increased by 300 and bumped up the unemployment rate to 5.2 percent in December from 4.1 percent in November.

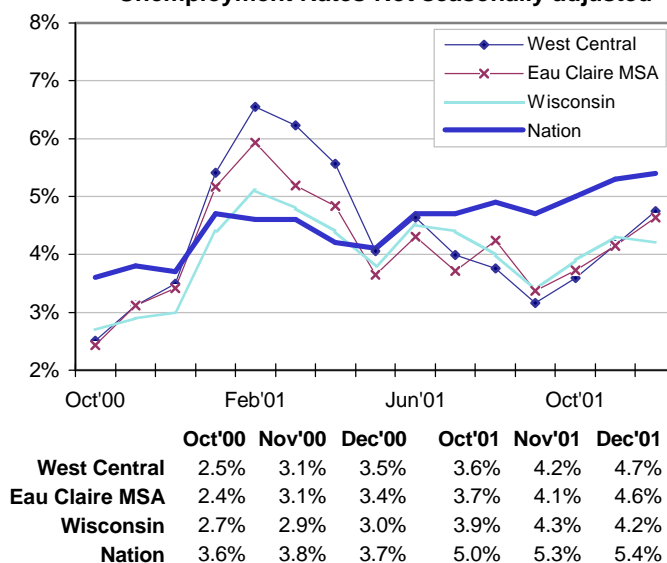
Clark County, however, had the highest rate in the region with 6.4 percent unemployed in December, an increase from 5.4 percent in November. Pierce County had the lowest regional rate with 3.7 percent unemployed. Pierce County also reported one of the smallest increases in the number of residents who filed a claim for unemployment compensation benefits (Pepin reported the least).

The number of claims filed for benefits increased by 2,035 in December for the entire nine-county region. That's more than the increase in the total number of unemployed in the region of 1,300. The higher level of unemployment claims points to residents

who are working shorter hours and who are eligible for reduced amounts of unemployment compensation.

These residents who receive partial benefits while working part-time are included in the estimate of employed workers. The counties where the increase in claims outnumbered the increase in unemployment include Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire and Polk.

Unemployment Rates-Not seasonally adjusted



December Estimates	Wisconsin	EC MSA	Barron	Clark	Dunn	Pepin	Pierce	Polk	St.Croix
Civilian Labor Force*	3,035,200	84,600	24,200	16,100	23,300	3,200	21,400	24,000	35,200
Employed	2,908,700	80,700	23,000	15,000	22,400	3,000	20,600	22,700	33,600
Unemployed	126,500	3,900	1,300	1,000	900	200	800	1,300	1,600
Unemployment rate(%)	4.2%	4.6%	4.7%	6.4%	3.9%	5.8%	3.7%	5.4%	4.7%
Total jobs, all industries**	2,851,600	77,500	21,900	10,100	16,500	2,200	11,400	15,700	27,300
Construction & Mining	124,610	3,440	760	490	730	170	510	930	1,710
Manufacturing	576,850	11,320	6,650	3,280	2,060	180	1,460	4,630	6,620
Transportation & Public Util.	136,910	3,860	690	410	520	120	490	500	1,120
Wholesale Trade	136,970	3,360	570	580	650	270	300	350	600
Retail Trade	515,340	19,340	4,350	1,360	4,530	420	2,300	2,770	6,150
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	153,320	3,140	400	230	450	70	330	480	850
Services	788,130	20,800	3,830	1,600	2,710	420	2,120	3,220	6,330
Government	419,470	12,210	4,630	2,160	4,810	550	3,860	2,780	3,970
Change from previous month									
Civilian Labor Force*	-16,100	-1,100	0	0	-300	-100	0	500	100
Employed	-12,000	-1,500	-200	-200	-400	-100	-100	300	-100
Unemployed	-4,100	400	300	200	100	0	100	200	200
Unemployment rate(%)	-0.1%	0.5%	1.1%	1.0%	0.5%	0.9%	0.4%	0.7%	0.4%
Total jobs, all industries**	-5,000	-1,200	-100	0	-200	-100	100	200	-100
Construction & Mining	-7,500	-600	-200	-100	-100	0	0	-100	0
Manufacturing	-3,170	-170	-20	-50	20	0	30	-30	-90
Transportation & Public Util.	600	-10	0	10	10	0	0	-10	-10
Wholesale Trade	-150	50	0	0	-10	0	0	0	-10
Retail Trade	3,000	10	40	0	-80	-60	-10	-30	80
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	620	10	0	0	10	0	0	0	-10
Services	3,200	-110	-10	10	-40	0	-10	270	-50
Government	-1,600	-450	40	50	10	-10	120	140	30
Change from one year ago									
Civilian Labor Force*	27,100	300	300	300	400	0	-200	900	200
Employed	-10,300	-800	200	200	200	0	-400	500	-600
Unemployed	37,400	1,000	100	100	200	0	200	400	800
Unemployment rate(%)	1.2%	1.2%	0.3%	0.6%	0.8%	1.4%	1.1%	1.7%	2.4%
Total jobs, all industries**	-11,500	-400	200	100	200	0	300	400	700
Construction & Mining	-1,200	600	0	0	100	0	0	100	200
Manufacturing	-34,970	-1,100	-50	20	-50	10	40	90	-50
Transportation & Public Util.	-360	70	10	30	20	0	-30	0	-50
Wholesale Trade	-2,740	160	0	-20	-10	0	20	-10	10
Retail Trade	1,190	250	10	-10	40	-10	60	-10	260
Finance,Insurance,Real Estate	2,900	390	-30	-30	20	0	10	10	50
Services	13,790	-460	240	10	-10	-10	60	100	160
Government	9,910	-300	60	20	180	0	150	130	150

* Includes participants residing in area. ** Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

2001 Annual Average									
Unemployment Rate	4.3%	4.4%	5.1%	7.1%	3.8%	5.4%	3.7%	5.6%	4.2%

The number of regional jobs declined by 1,400 in December. Most of the job reduction occurred with construction employers from nearly every county in West Central Wisconsin as mostly seasonal factors triggered the loss of 1,100 jobs. Compared with one year ago, however, there are roughly 1,000 more jobs in construction.

Although manufacturing job losses have slowed, another 300 workers were laid off in December and for the year and the region lost 1,100 production jobs. Most of that job loss occurred in the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan area.

Some of the rural counties also lost manufacturing jobs, but other counties, especially Pierce and Polk, added jobs.

Overall, for the entire West Central region there was an increase in the number of jobs since last December in all major industry divisions except manufacturing. Job increases occurred primarily in the rural counties of the region, however. For the metro area, there was a reduction of 400 jobs primarily from manufacturing, services and government employers.

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